THE PENDULUM

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Senior Reporter

LaTony Galloway still remembers how the cold, steel handcuffs felt on his wrists the first time he was arrested.

By the time Galloway was 22, he would be in and out of prison for the next 15 years, stuck in an endless cycle with no way to escape.

Welcome to the world of a past offender. Galloway, who is now 37, said he remembers sleeping on the floor at the Alamance County Jail for almost two months. In 15 years, he said he has seen more than his share of overcrowded jail cells and court-appointed lawyers.

Galloway is one of the many repeat offenders in North Carolina. After finding himself homeless upon his most recent release from prison three years ago, Galloway decided it was time to make a change.

"I wanted to change my life," he said.

Galloway found job assistance through Sustainable Alamance, an organization that aims to help reintegrate past offenders into society. "I didn't want to go back to jail. I didn't want to do prison, because I wouldn't wish that on my worst enemy."

Recidivism in North Carolina and United States

While his goals are admirable and certainly attainable, Galloway is fighting an uphill battle against local, statewide and national statistics. Each point to massive numbers of incarcerated individuals and unwavering statistical evidence of recidivism across the United States.

In a biennial study conducted by the North Carolina Sentencing and Policy Advisory Commission, recidivism corresponds to any past offender's repeated criminal activity that results in a rearrest or reincarceration. The most recent survey, which evaluated recidivism following the 2008-09 fiscal year, noted that North Carolina rates have remained steady during the past 20 years.

From 1989 to 2009, rearrest rates stayed between 31 and 36 percent. The most noticeable jump occurred between the 2005-06 fiscal year and now, rising more than 3 percent.

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